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The Director

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Washington, D.C. 20505

15 DEC 1978

Honorable Bob Wilson  
Permanent Select Committee  
on Intelligence  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Wilson:

The meeting we held on September 13, 1978, to discuss your letter of July 28 to the President was extremely useful to me and my colleagues. Such full and frank exchanges go a long way towards broadening the area of agreement and mutual understanding between us.

As a result of our discussions I have had the entire process of clearing covert actions restudied. I believe there is one small, but very significant, change that we can make which will help to clarify the situation. Henceforth, we will categorize findings as either "specific" or "general." Looking at the Presidential Finding [redacted] items A, B, C, D and E and the paragraphs under F which pertain to maintaining

[redacted] would be considered "specific"; other subheadings would be considered "general." The purpose of making this distinction is to clarify what procedures ensue to check on the proper implementation of a finding once approved by the President.

a. In the case of specific findings, what is to be accomplished, and where and when, is clear in the language used by the President; further instruction or clearance within the Executive Branch should not be required. Clearly, responding under the Hughes-Ryan Amendment to the appropriate committees of Congress is required. Overall, this procedure involves the President's making a specific determination, the CIA's reporting to the Congress and carrying out the Presidential Finding.

b. In the case of general findings what is to be accomplished is specified, but exactly where, when and how is usually left for later determination. The objective is to anticipate requirements for covert action so as to be quickly responsive in changing circumstances. Usually these findings involve the Covert Action infrastructure or existing liaison relationships. They are generally low risk activities from an operational standpoint.

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